



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Edinburgh Research Explorer

### Forces for Good?

**Citation for published version:**

Duncanson, C 2009, 'Forces for Good? Narratives of Military Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 63-80.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740802567808>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1080/14616740802567808](https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740802567808)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

International Feminist Journal of Politics

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

Duncanson, C. (2009). Forces for Good?: Narratives of Military Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 11(1), 63-80. 10.1080/14616740802567808

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

## **FORCES FOR GOOD? NARRATIVES OF MILITARY MASCULINITY IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS**

Claire Duncanson

University of Edinburgh

### **ABSTRACT**

Evidence of military involvement in sexual exploitation and aggression against civilians on peacekeeping operations has led many feminists to question the appropriateness of using soldiers to create peace. They argue that the problems stem from a particular form of military masculinity, hegemonic within Western militaries, associated with practices of strength, toughness, and aggressive heterosexuality. Masculinities, however, are multiple, dynamic, and contradictory. As they are constructed in relation to the contexts men find themselves in, involvement in peacekeeping may itself play a role in the construction of alternative military masculinities. Examining autobiographical accounts of soldiers involved in peacekeeping in Bosnia in the 1990s, I argue that there is evidence of an alternative discourse of 'peacekeeper masculinity', but question whether it fully challenges the hegemony of the warrior model. I acknowledge that peacekeeper masculinity is also problematic because although it disrupts elements of the traditional linkages between militarism and masculinity, it still relies on a feminized and racialized 'Other.' Yet, I suggest that this is not the only way in which peacekeeper masculinity can be viewed. It can alternatively be considered part of a 'regendered military' which may be a necessary component of successful conflict resolution.

### **KEYWORDS:**

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

Peacekeeping, Gender, Masculinities, Militaries, British, Army, Bosnia, Autobiography, Discourse Analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

Evidence of military involvement in sexual exploitation and unchecked aggression against civilians on peacekeeping operations has led many feminist activists and scholars to question the appropriateness of using soldiers to create peace.<sup>1</sup> They argue that the problems stem from a particular form of military masculinity, hegemonic within Western armed forces, associated with practices of strength, toughness and aggressive heterosexuality. Masculinities, however, as the work of Connell and others has shown, are multiple, dynamic and contradictory, due to their being actively constructed – they are processes, not character types (Connell 1987; 1995). They are constructed in relation to bodies, social definitions of a man's place and the shifting contexts men find themselves in (Hooper 2000; Connell 2002a). As such, involvement in peacekeeping may itself play a role in the construction of alternative military masculinities (Enloe 1993: 33). In this article, I analyse autobiographical accounts of soldiers involved in peacekeeping in Bosnia in the 1990s, in order to explore whether there is evidence of an alternative discourse of 'peacekeeper masculinity.' I go on to discuss two crucial questions. If there is such a discourse of peacekeeper masculinity, does it challenge the hegemony of the warrior model of military masculinity? Secondly, what are the implications of peacekeeper masculinity, both in terms of achieving peace and security, and in terms of gender relations?

Firstly, I discuss the concept of masculinity and its construction in the British Army. I then outline the changing operational environment implied by the military's aim of being a 'force for good.' In the third section, I justify the method employed: discourse analysis of

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

autobiographical accounts. The main body of the paper then analyses soldiers' reflections on peacekeeping in three sections, considering the practices they are involved in, relations with women and relations with men. The fifth section discusses the significance of peacekeeper masculinity and the sixth concludes.

## CONSTRUCTION OF MILITARY MASCULINITIES

Following the work of Connell, I use a definition of gender as practice. Gender is something which is actively negotiated by men and women, in relation to both their physical embodiment and social structures within which they live (Connell 1987; 1995; 2002a). As a result, there is more than one way – although not infinitely possible ways – of being a man or a woman. Crucially, the concept of gender is, by definition, relational. In order to construct masculinity, ideas of femininity must be constructed that are supportive and complementary. Army training is a key site where such constructions take place. This training is a 'critical period in a man's life,' which works by breaking down civilian identity and rebuilding the individual as a soldier (McManners 1993: 112). Many accounts of military training demonstrate how gender informs this process, as all things 'feminine' are disparaged, and 'manhood' is equated with toughness under fire.<sup>2</sup> Men, on the whole, find combat horrible and unnatural, resulting in the need for this gendered combination of harsh discipline in training, punishment for desertion, and rewards for fighting (Goldstein 2001: 253). As Enloe memorably put it: 'If masculinity "in the raw" were sufficient, there would be little need for the sweat, blisters, and humiliations of basic training' (Enloe 1993: 55).

However, as indicated by the emphasis on gender as practice, there is always freedom for variety and multiplicity in models of military masculinity. By choosing their branch,

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

regiment, and job specialisation, for example, military men construct different military masculinities (Barrett 2001). Nationality, race, age and class all also intersect with gender and play their part in the construction of military masculinities (Hooper 1998: 29; Higate and Henry 2004: 484). The word intersect is crucial as identities are not constructed as a collection of discrete elements, but 'gender infuses all our identities so that race, age, class, ethnicity, ability and nationality are also gender specific identities' (Peterson and True 1998: 16). As such we have the different masculinities of officers, where authority and rationality tend to be emphasised, and the infantry soldier, where masculinity is more likely to be constructed around ideas of physical strength and aggression (Enloe 1993: 57; Connell 2002b: 38). Moreover, there is complexity and contradiction within models of military masculinity. For example, despite the notion that soldiers have to be tough, and 'real men don't cry', war stories and soldiers' testimonies abound with evidence of soldiers showing emotion, crying and handling other's grief with compassion and empathy (Morgan 1994; Hynes 1998).

In the British Army, despite the multiplicity and contradictions, the construction of the soldier as tough, brave, ready for action and also hard drinking, heterosexual and physically fit, can be said to have prevailed as the ideal or 'hegemonic' model (Higate 2003c: 30). This does not mean that all soldiers fit this description; it means that this model commands power and respect and is recognisable as an ideal (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985: 592-600). Indeed, the majority of men will most likely not fit the description. If, however, they do not challenge the dominance of the ideal, they are 'complicit', reaping the rewards of the 'patriarchal dividend' (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985: 594). The concept of hegemonic masculinity helps us theorise how masculinities can vary and change and yet why men overall have remained in positions of power and wealth. Multiple masculinities exist in the military but the hegemony of the warrior model is part of the reason that certain men dominate within the

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

military, why there is pressure on men to conform to this form of masculinity, and why many feminists find using the military as an instrument of peace problematic. This is why it is important to consider not just whether alternative military masculinities are being constructed but whether they challenge the hegemonic model.

## **FORCES FOR GOOD?**

There have been fundamental changes to militaries throughout the western world in the post Cold War period, not least the increased focus on broader regional and international security tasks such as humanitarian and peace support operations (Moskos, Williams and Segal 2000: 3; Dorman 2002; Cheeseman 2005: 71). The British Army fits this trend in many ways, and has fashioned itself as a 'Force for Good' (Ministry of Defence 1998; 2003; Dandeker 2000; Dorman 2005). Of course, the British Army has always been involved in a variety of tasks, including counter insurgency operations, peacekeeping and domestic duties as well as warfighting. However, the growing employment of the Army on peace operations and other non-traditional security tasks in the 1990s arguably required it to place a greater emphasis than ever before on non combat skills (Moskos, Williams, and Segal 2000: 3).

Given that gender is a practice, something we do, and as we do new things, in new contexts, we construct new gender identities, did this involvement in peacekeeping operations in Bosnia in the 1990s have an impact on the construction of military masculinities? I am not suggesting that all or most British soldiers changed from enacting 'warrior masculinity' to 'peacekeeper masculinity' in a linear development. Due to the fact that soldiers are trained for fighting, which is linked to masculinity in training, but have often found themselves doing other things, there have always been contradictions within the masculinities of soldiers in the

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

British Army. What I am suggesting is that the focus on peacekeeping in the Balkans in the 1990s may have affected these contradictions in interesting and significant ways. How did soldiers make sense of what they were doing? Can we identify the attempt to construct masculinities in British Army perhaps more conducive to the achievement of peace and security? Most importantly, if so, do they challenge the hegemony of the warrior model of masculinity?

## READING AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

This paper seeks to explore these questions using four autobiographical accounts of soldiers involved in peacekeeping in Bosnia in the 1990s – Monty Woolley, *Cleanse Their Souls: Peacekeeping in Bosnia's Civil War 1992-1993* (Woolley 2004), Milos Stankovic *Trusted Mole: A Soldier's Journey into Bosnia's Heart of Darkness* (Stankovic 2000), Colonel Alistair Duncan, "Operating in Bosnia," (Duncan 1994) and General Sir Michael Rose, *Fighting for Peace: Lessons from Bosnia* (Rose 1998). Woolley served in Bosnia in 1992–3 as a Lieutenant in 9<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Lancers. Bosnia was his first tour of duty. Stankovic (his name comes from his Yugoslavian father) was a major in the Parachute Regiment. Known as Mike Stanley in the army, Stankovic is fluent in Serbo-Croat and served as a battalion liaison officer in 1993, and then as a liaison officer in 1994 under General Rose. Duncan commanded a British UN Battalion in 1993 and Rose was Commander of the UN Protection Force in Bosnia from January 1994 to January 1995. All four are similar in class and education in that they are British officers, educated at Sandhurst, but differ in that they range in rank from Lieutenant to General, in age from 20s to 50s, and in national origin as Stankovic has a Serbian father. As officers, they are likely to draw on different aspects of hegemonic military masculinity than

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

ordinary soldiers; however, as members of combat regiments, the idealised notion of the brave, heroic, strong warrior remains potent.

Autobiographical accounts offer an information-rich source of soldiers' reflections, describing in detail the various events and personalities over the course of their tours of duty. Of course, they also have their limitations. They can only offer partial, subjective accounts, may overemphasise some events and misrepresent others, and contain only what the authors want recorded for public consumption (Personal Narratives Group 1989; Harrison 2001: 111; Smith and Watson 2001). However, the narrative style offers a level of detail about how soldiers make sense of what they were doing on peacekeeping operations which makes them particularly useful sources for researching gender identities. As such, the potential problems inherent in reading autobiographies – that they are not objective, reliable versions of events – can be, in a sense, a strength. They are not being used as sources of historical fact about the conflict in the Balkans, but for what they tell us about the constructions of masculinity of the authors. As Smith and Watson put it: 'any utterance in an autobiographical text, even if inaccurate or distorted, characterises its writer' (Smith and Watson 2001: 12). Of course, autobiographical accounts fail to provide representative cases from which we can generalize. However, the intention of this paper is not to make generalisations about the overall state of British masculinities during the 1990s. Rather it is looking for understandings by considering the cases of 'key informants' who have a 'profound and central grasp of a particular cultural world' (Plummer 2001: 154).

Discourse analysis can be used to investigate gender identities in autobiographical texts because of its close attention to the gendered structure of language. Discourse theorists argue that language is a system of signs, and that the meaning of things is established through a



Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

series of juxtapositions, rather than anything to do with the essence of the thing itself (Hansen 2006: 19). Feminists have drawn attention to the way in which the privileged term of each juxtaposed pair is associated with masculinity. Such gender dualisms have political significance far beyond their role in male-female relations. Due to their role in structuring language and thought, gender dichotomies structure how we think and act about everything, including global politics ( Peterson and True 1998: 19; Hooper 2000: 43; Cohn, Hill and Ruddick 2005).

Hansen further argues that the giving of meaning is rarely achieved through a simple binary, however, but rather through a more complex process of positive 'linking' to other terms and negative 'differentiation' from their juxtaposed 'Others' (Hansen 2006: 19). Thus certain terms are linked to each other to form a discourse of masculinity (hard, rational, strong, tough men) whilst simultaneously being differentiated from other terms, which form a discourse of femininity (soft, irrational, weak, tender women). This is important because it is through the linkages as much as the differentiation that gendered dichotomies have political salience beyond male/female relations.

The authors unintentionally but inevitably draw on these gendered discourses when writing their autobiographical accounts. For example, soldiers are well versed in the official military and state view that peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention are about a 'Responsibility to Protect' (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001) or 'Saving Strangers' (Wheeler 2000). Feminists have highlighted the gendered and racialized nature of this dominant discourse, which positions the international community as the heroic, white male necessary to protect the vulnerable, inferior, feminised 'Other' – the state it must rescue (Orford 1999; Razack 2004; Whitworth 2004). Autobiographical accounts are not written in a

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

vacuum, and either reinforce or disrupt such discourses through their choice of words, analogies and metaphors. If soldiers involved in peacekeeping portray civilians in target states with agency and worth, or valorise skills and practices associated with conflict resolution, skills and practices which are traditionally linked to femininity, they disrupt traditional discourses. It is through paying close attention to linking and differentiation that we can see the possibilities of challenging or destabilizing these discourses (Hansen 2006: 21).

For this article, passages where the authors reflect on peacekeeping activities – what they did and why – and relations with others (men and women) were transcribed for discourse analysis. These passages in particular were chosen because it is in such reflections that we would expect to see reinforcements of or challenges to the traditional discourses. Thematic accounts for each author were written up as a case study of a soldier and his construction of masculinity, paying attention to where traditional linkages and differentiations were reinforced, and where they were challenged. Then the data was reanalysed across the case studies, taking each theme in turn in order to explore the similarities and differences across the four autobiographies, in order to be sensitive to the intersectionality of gender with class, age, rank and nationality (this method is based on Connell 1995: 87-89).

## **PEACEKEEPING AS EMASCULATING, PEACEKEEPING AS MASCULINE**

Analysis of the four autobiographies indicates that the soldiers experienced a tension between the desire to do what they learned to be most effective in bringing about peace and the desire or demand to be manly. This tension can be seen in two themes which run through soldiers' reflections. One is that peacekeeping practices are inferior, frustrating and less manly pursuits than real fighting. The other is the many attempts to position peacekeeping as thoroughly

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

masculine behaviour. The former theme reinforces the traditional gender discourse and the hegemony of the traditional warrior masculinity. In the latter, however, we can start to discern the destabilization of the traditional linkages and differentiations, and the construction of an alternative military masculinity, associated with peacekeeping. Moreover, this construction is simultaneously the attempt to position it as the new hegemonic masculinity. Hegemony is not achieved through a contest for superiority between ready formed masculinities or groups of men, but is intimately connected to the construction of such groupings (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985: 594). When soldiers valorise peacekeeping tasks as masculine, they are not only asserting that there is another way to be a 'real man'; they are asserting that it is *the* way.

Peacekeeping is one of a broad repertoire of both formal and informal activities undertaken by the 'International Community' to prevent, halt or resolve conflicts (Mazurana et al. 2005: 18). Activities involve peace negotiations, monitoring cease fires and humanitarian activities such as delivering aid and reconstruction work. In Bosnia, the mandate stipulated that British soldiers use force only in self-defence and in reply to attacks against United Nations 'safe areas' (United Nations 1996). It is this minimal use of force which perhaps most clearly distinguishes peacekeeping from war fighting, and which the soldiers' reflections on peacekeeping focus on.

In the autobiographical accounts, there are occasions when the authors find this command to control the use of force and to focus on negotiation frustrating and, as I argue, more than that, emasculating. Woolley links the UN approach to timidity, indecisiveness and impotence (Woolley 2004: 80-81, 136). When providing security for aid convoys and unable to return fire when under attack, Woolley complains:

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

This position was risible in the eyes of the locals and fast costing us their respect. The boy in the playground who had continually bitten his lip needed to give the school bully a swift right hook and show him for the coward he was. To put up with continued digs and snipes would only lead to others being bullied as well; it had to be stopped (Woolley 2004: 80-81).

The analogy with bullying in the school playground indicates how it is masculinity which is at stake. This theme of emasculation is echoed by Stankovic, who writes of his frustration at the way in which soldiers are 'proscribed by ludicrously complicated rules of engagement which effectively neuter any soldier on the ground,' and given just enough leeway to administer 'miniscule amounts of firepower, usually in the protection of aid agencies' (Stankovic 2000: 324), and Rose who is angered when his approach to the mission is labelled as 'soft' (Rose 1998: 210, 289).

The authors prefer to take a 'more robust' (Rose 1998: 17, 19, 35, 53) or more 'hardline' (Rose 1998: 57) approach. Taking tough action and being involved in actual fighting is exciting (Stankovic 2000: 67; Woolley 2004: 139, 179), restores self esteem (Woolley 2004: 55, 91) and gets results (Rose 1998: 73, 156, 187). Where fighting is not an option, masculinity can be asserted in other ways. Duncan recounts an incident where the British soldiers have to back down and defuse a situation of increasingly dangerous firing between them and some Croat forces. After the British company commander talks to the local Bosnian commanders and manages to de-escalate the situation he 'ended up parking his Warrior in the main street of Gornji Vakuf between the two factions and smoking a couple of packets of Hamlets, but he got away with it...' (Duncan 1994: 16). It is as if, after a potentially emasculating situation where a British soldier has had to minimise fire power and use

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

persuasion instead of force, he then has to reassert masculinity by demonstrating bravery and a 'too tough to care' attitude. Here, the traditional linkages between soldiers, toughness, action and virility, and differentiation from softness and passiveness, are reinforced.

However, all the authors at other points in their accounts construct peacekeeping as masculine. This is done in three ways. By claiming that peacekeeping is tougher, more dangerous and challenging than war (Duncan 1994: 12; Rose 1998: 4, 11, 163, 279; Stankovic 2000: 189). Secondly, by valorising and linking to masculinity the core principles of peacekeeping, impartiality and the ability to control the use of force (Rose 1998: 316-8, 354). After one of his interpreters is killed and some of his soldiers are convinced something must be done, Duncan argues: 'revenge is not the course of action of a civilised man; we must keep careful control of the way people behave and we must be seen to be impartial, actively impartial' (Duncan 1994: 16). Control and impartiality have traditionally been linked to masculinity, but they have not always been linked to the model of warrior masculinity, hegemonic in the Army, which has more commonly been linked to aggression and a desire to defeat the enemy. The third way, however, is potentially more radical in that soldiering is linked to traditionally feminised practices. Here, the everyday practices of peacekeeping such as building friendships, drinking coffee and chatting are linked to bravery and effective soldiering. For example Woolley writes of the importance of 'meeting the locals, showing them we were human, building friendship, gleaning information, or at least moods, and demonstrating to them that we were not scared of their environment' (Woolley 2004: 154). Similarly, Rose writes that at checkpoints, 'It was far better to sit with [local soldiers] in their bunkers drinking coffee and discussing the current situation than to stare at them from behind armoured glass' (Rose 1998: 106-7, also see 143 and 176; Duncan 1994: 13, 18 and Stankovic 2000: 353). Further new linkages are made when the authors make the case for

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

negotiation being superior to using force and requiring 'toughness' and 'aggression' (Rose 1998: 73, 335; Stankovic 2000: 335, 343).

This is contrasted with more traditional military practices which are disparaged. Excessive military hardware is said to make soldiers more vulnerable and subjects of ridicule (Woolley 2004: 154). The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)'s preferred approach to the conflict – to wage war from the skies on the Serbs – is feminised. NATO pilots are 'precious', cowardly, and 'zip around making pretty patterns in the sky' before missing their targets (Rose 1998: 189, 258-262; Stankovic 2000: 322-3). Although there is a long history of rivalry between different branches of the military, which partially explains soldiers' animosity towards airmen, the fact that they present the rivalry in gendered terms is significant. For Rose and Stankovic, even when involved in peacekeeping, soldiers are more masculine than pilots engaging in war fighting. This contributes to the new discourse of military masculinity, linking soldiering and masculinity to peacekeeping rather than war fighting.

The new linkages and differentiations indicate (and construct) alternative military masculinities, associated with peacekeeping practices; but does this peacekeeper masculinity challenge the hegemony of the warrior model? In other words, how do we know if the disruptions to the traditional discourse are more significant than the contradictions which have always existed in military masculinities? To answer this, consideration of the relational aspect of masculinity construction – the following two sections – is required.

## **RELATIONS WITH WOMEN**

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

As masculinities are constructed in relation to ideas about femininity, consideration of attitudes towards women, and the various interactions and relationships with different women on peacekeeping operations are essential when exploring constructions of masculinity (Enloe, 1993: 19-20). Feminist scholars have pointed out how women and femininities are constructed in specific ways during times of conflict, irrespective of what women actually do.<sup>3</sup> The portrayal of women as supportive wives and mothers or as passive victims in need of protection is the essential counterpart to the hegemonic military masculinity of the heroic warrior. 'Armed conflict encourages expectations that men will fight and women will support them on the "home front". The popular perception is that men are soldiers or aggressors and women are wives, mothers, nurses, social workers and sex-workers' (El Jack 2003: 3). When the context is peacekeeping, what happens to such positioning?

The lack of attention to women in the autobiographical accounts is indicative of how little this discourse is challenged. Certainly, it is in the contexts of wives, mothers and sex workers in these autobiographies that women receive many of their mentions. For Woolley in particular, and Stankovic at times, a casual sexism is apparent in the objectification and trivialization of women (Stankovic 2000: 289, 347; Woolley 2004: 105, 112, 114), casual approval of pornography (Stankovic 2000: 30; Woolley 2004: 156), and ignorance and apathy about the violence done to women through trafficking (Stankovic 2000: 69). When Stankovic recounts an event which involves the women of Hadzici, who stage a road block in order to demand the return of their husbands, they become the 'mad women of Hadzici,' who are hysterical and have to be humoured in negotiations, as if the women are a mere nuisance and as if negotiating with them was all a big game (Stankovic 2000: 81-2).

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

However, there is notable variation, with Stankovic at other times, and Rose fairly consistently, writing of women – both from the Balkans and their domestic lives – with respect and admiration. Of course, it is not unusual for men to love and admire the women in their personal lives yet to participate in the constructions of femininity which position masculinities and men as superior. The question becomes one of whether women in general are being positioned as subjects with agency and worthy of respect, not passive victims, sexualised objects or serving men. For example, Rose's account of the same women of Hadzici treats them as strong women, important players in trying to achieve justice (Rose 1998: 115). That there is simply not enough material in these accounts to answer that question here is frustrating but unsurprising. Enloe may be right that men learn about 'appropriate' male behaviour by 'relying on (while still controlling) women, by fantasizing about women, and by working to separate themselves from women,' but because it is assumed that men 'naturally' feel what they feel and do what they do, these processes are rarely remarked upon (Enloe 1993: 19).

## **RELATIONS WITH OTHER MEN**

Just as masculinities are constructed in relation to femininities, they are constructed in relation to other masculinities. This is done when, whether at a conscious or subconscious level, men accept or reject different ways of being a man demonstrated by other men, and in actual interactions with other men, often involving power struggles to assert one's masculinity. The authors construct their masculinity in relation to many different groups of other men, including for example politicians, journalists and NGO workers, but the most common 'Other' for their constructions of the 'Self' is the Balkan soldier.



Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

As above, there are two competing themes. Sometimes the Balkan soldier is described with admiration, in ways which reinforce the traditional links between warriors, masculinity, and toughness. Woolley notes approvingly that 'Bosnia is a man's world and I think drinking is a respected pastime' (Woolley 2004: 27), and that 'These men seemed proud, happy and confidently at ease, very much men's men. Their respect for size and strength was clearly part of their culture' (Woolley 2004: 28). Similarly, when Stankovic tells his girlfriend that the locals kept fighting in the -67 degree temperatures, without protective clothing or vehicles, he notes: 'We think we're hard as nails in the Paras, but these boys are in a completely different league' (Stankovic 2000: 74).

This discourse is backed up by the construction of military masculinity in relation to 'City Boys back home with their stripy suits, filo-faxes and sad nights out' (Woolley 2004: 125-6, also see Stankovic 2000: 136), the NGO workers with their 'scrawny beards, check shirts and hill-walking trousers' (Woolley 2004: 124) who are mere naïve 'do-gooders' (Stankovic 2000: 64, 65, 92, 169) and politicians and academics, who are often characterised by indecision and hypocrisy (Rose 1998: 225, 259, 279; Stankovic 2000: 440). Such differentiations from these 'Others' serve to reinforce the traditional discourse linking soldiers with masculinity, toughness and action, and cement the discursive solidarity between fighting men.

The more dominant theme, however, finds the local soldiers presented as hyper masculine – aggressive, irrational and violent. This portrayal of the 'Other', constructs British military masculinity as more controlled, civilized and intelligent. Size and strength are always commented upon: Stankovic encounters 'a Neanderthal – six foot four, thickset, huge head with black, close set, unintelligent eyes and a skinhead crop' who leaves the bar to fire his

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

machine gun into the night (Stankovic 2000: 70; also see Woolley 2004: 13, 116, 196). Rose notes that Mladic, 'fat, swaggering and coarse-featured' (Rose 1998: 48) launches into 'crazed accounts of what he would do to anyone who threatened the Serbs' (Rose 1998: 274). Duncan cites an incident where a local general, General Pralic:

leapt out [of his car] brandishing his pistol and shouting and screaming against everybody. The subaltern took his helmet off, climbed out, fetched his interpreter and said, "General, I don't know what you're doing but officers should not behave like that. Put that pistol away, calm down and behave like a gentleman" (Duncan 1994: 18, also see 11).

The projection of aspects of traditional hegemonic masculinity which come to be rejected and then projected onto less privileged groups of men is not unique to this context (Niva 1997; Hooper 1998: 37). There is a long history of British military masculinities being constructed in relation to the backward, irrational, violent 'Other' of various parts of the British Empire. The imperial mission was intimately connected to masculinity as British soldiers were constructed as 'naturally' braver, more professional and more disciplined than the masculinity of the men in colonized nations. Orford has shown how discourses of humanitarian intervention not only continue this tradition of portraying the elite men of target states as aggressive and violent, but position the civilian population as in need of protection. Constructions of peacekeepers as 'the heroic agents of progress, democratic values, peace and security' thus demand a variety of racialized or feminized 'Others' (Orford 1999). What, then, is the significance of 'peacekeeper masculinity'?

## **DOES PEACEKEEPER MASCULINITY MATTER?**

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

There are two aspects to the question of the significance of peacekeeper masculinity. Firstly, does it challenge the hegemony of the traditional 'warrior' masculinity in the British Army? Secondly, given its colonial heritage, what difference does it make, in terms of achieving peace, security and gender equality?

I have argued that attempts to construct peacekeeper masculinity are simultaneously attempts to position it as hegemonic. This can be seen in the way in which the hyper-masculinity of the Balkan commanders is not a stable construction, but rather one which is always at risk of collapsing into femininity. Accordingly, Stankovic's Neanderthal ends up crying when his machine gun breaks (Stankovic 2000: 71). Rose's descriptions of the big, aggressive, local commanders contain as many references to physical weaknesses, irrationality and an excess of emotion (Rose 1998: 200, 252, 256, 274, 287). The linking of the Balkan commanders, in other respects the epitome of warrior masculinity, to the feminised traits of weakness, irrationality and emotion, not only constructs peacekeeper masculinity as controlled, disciplined and physically fit, but as superior, the ideal way of being a soldier and a man – the hegemonic model.

Conversely, in the frustration expressed about having to restrain the use of force, and envy towards those who can get on with the business of fighting, the traditional discourse linking soldiers to masculinity, to fighting, aggression and beating an enemy, is repeatedly reinforced. A more accurate characterisation of what we can read from these autobiographies, then, is perhaps that the traditional model of military masculinity has adopted some of the practices associated with conflict resolution, but not at the expense of war fighting practices, which remain valued and respected. It has been argued that this strategy of 'dialectical pragmatism,'

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

whereby hegemonic masculinity appropriates from other masculinities whatever appears to be pragmatically useful for continued domination, is how hegemonic masculinity operates in other contexts, and indeed, by definition (Hooper 2000; Demetriou 2001; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 844, 848). For example, Niva identifies a new form of US military masculinity emerging out of the first Gulf War, when an 'openly articulated sense of manly vulnerability and human compassion' appeared to have replaced 'bravado or stern invincibility' (Niva 1997: 118). Niva contends that rather than fundamental change, this was nothing more than 'a redefinition of masculinity in man's favour through an expansion of the concept of legitimate masculinity and thus an extension of masculinity's power over women and deviant men who do not measure up to this new paradigm' (Niva 1997: 122).

This raises our second question: what difference does peacekeeper masculinity make? Many have argued that even such an ostensibly more benign masculinity is problematic because of its construction of the 'Other' as primitive, irrational, aggressive and in need of protection and the 'Self' as superior, democratic, peace-loving and humanitarian, thereby continuing a patronising imperial discourse and legitimising intervention (Orford 1999; Razack 2004; Whitworth 2004). Moreover, as peacekeeper masculinity remains a militarized masculinity, constructed through feminized others, it reinforces hierarchical gender relations which ensure that power, wealth and respect are only available for certain groups of elite men. It also legitimizes the military and the militarization of peace processes (Cockburn and Zarkov 2002a: 16). We then neglect alternative ways of resolving conflict that recognise the gendered structure of inequality and exploitation upon which many conflicts rest (Enloe 1993; Orford 1999; Whitworth 2004; Mazurana 2005).

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

On the other hand, it would be a mistake to dismiss the discourse of peacekeeper masculinity. Do we really want to say that it makes no difference, that it is just the latest incarnation of hegemonic masculinity, if soldiers are constructing the skills and practices associated with conflict resolution as masculine? Any disruptions to the traditional linkages of military masculinity with aggression and winning by force are surely important. According to Connell and Messerschmidt, hegemonic masculinity can be positive: 'the conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity should explicitly acknowledge the possibility of democratizing gender relations, of abolishing power differentials, not just of reproducing hierarchy' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 853). Of course, the construction of peacekeeper masculinity through a feminized 'Other' raises serious doubts over the extent to which it can be said to be abolishing all power differentials, but that should not blind us to what is progressive. Soldiers who portray negotiating for peace and reconstructing schools as masculine are worth taking seriously, not just because they are not prioritising combat, but because they are challenging traditional gender dichotomies. They are challenging both the privileging of the masculine over the feminine and the association of masculinity with war and femininity with peace, an association which has made it so hard for both women and men to challenge militarism and war (Enloe 1993; 2000; Tickner 1999: 8; Kovitz 2003: 6).

Moreover, there is evidence that a peacekeeper masculinity which democratizes gender relations – which embodies the best of both 'feminine' and 'masculine' qualities and is available to both women and men (Cockburn and Hubic 2002: 117) – would be welcomed by women in countries experiencing conflict. Cockburn and Hubic conclude from their finding that women's organizations in the Balkans wanted peacekeepers to be both more militarily assertive *and* more gender sensitive and inclusive:

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

The women are clearly not saying 'feminize the military'. On the other hand, they are just as clearly not admirers of Rambo. They are not saying 'we love your macho ways'. ... Rather, we would suggest, the women are implicitly asking for a regendered notion of the soldier (Cockburn and Hubic 2002: 116).

The discourse of peacekeeper masculinity which exists in these autobiographical accounts, albeit alongside the traditional discourse, is important because a 'regendered' notion of the soldier requires the creation of new linkages and differentiations. The questions then become, firstly, whether it is possible to construct this masculinity without relying on a negative construction of the 'Other,' and secondly, how to encourage and build upon such constructions.

In this latter respect it is significant that Duncan and Rose appear more able and willing to construct peacekeeper masculinity than Stankovic and Woolley. As a Colonel and a General, it is possibly this seniority in both age and rank which gives Duncan and Rose the space to be able to construct such alternative masculinities. In comparison to Woolley and Stankovic who need to prove themselves to be tough, the masculinity of Duncan and Rose is not in question, given their elite position and military record, allowing them to enact feminised traits without fear (see Segal 1997: 103). Peacekeeper masculinity will only be significant, however, if it is viewed as acceptable throughout the military. This requires that lower ranks are both adequately trained in peacekeeping skills *and* feel secure enough in their masculinity to be able to enact skills which have traditionally been positioned as feminine. As we have seen, training has traditionally focused on making young officers and recruits feel anything but secure in their manhood. Thus the promotion of peacekeeper masculinity would require a far

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

more fundamental overhaul of training than is either recognised or desired in current British Army policy.

The other pressing question raised by this paper is what the status of peacekeeper masculinity might be in the current post September 11 era, with the British Army on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraq has been characterised as 'three block warfare' where troops might be involved in traditional peacekeeping activities in one block of a city, peace enforcement in the adjacent block and full blown combat in the third (Holmes 2006: 105). Such complex operations where soldiers are expected to win hearts and minds, create peace and security, yet also use all their combat skills, provide increasing opportunity for the kinds of tensions explored in soldiers' reflections in this paper. Evidence of British Army involvement in the abuse of Iraqi civilians suggests that soldiers are not coping well with such tensions. In terms of peacekeeper masculinity, on the one hand, the increasing resistance in Iraq and Afghanistan to the presence of British troops and the consequent increase in casualties arguably reduce the space for alternative masculinities to be constructed and thrive – the emphasis becomes one of force protection and combat. At the same time, it is increasingly clear that the traditional warrior model of masculinity is not enough to cope with the complex demands of such operations.

## CONCLUSION

I have argued that there is evidence in the autobiographical accounts of the construction of an alternative military masculinity, associated with the practices of peacekeeping, and including skills and values traditionally positioned as feminine. Although this peacekeeper masculinity does not fully challenge the hegemony of the warrior model, its challenge to gendered

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

dichotomies associating masculinity with war and privileging them over femininity and peace, has the potential to be more significant than many feminists allow. It is through such challenges to traditional gender dichotomies that we can open up the space to challenge both militarism and oppressive masculinities.

Scepticism about the value of peacekeeper masculinity centres on the way in which it forms part of a discourse of the West as the heroic, white, male 'Self,' intervening to save a primitive, feminised, racialized 'Other.' This discourse constructs identities which both legitimise military intervention and disguise the role of the West in causing inequality and conflict. Whilst not denying the importance of these arguments, I have suggested that firstly, we consider ways in which peacekeeping masculinity could be constructed without forming part of a sexist and racist colonial discourse and secondly, that we should not ignore what is positive about peacekeeper masculinity. Rather than insisting that it only serves to legitimise militarism, I argue that it can also be interpreted as a challenge to militarism. This challenge is in line with the Balkan women's organisations who requested a 'regendered' military (Cockburn and Hubic 2002). It is to acknowledge that there are qualities in traditional military masculinity which are positive, such as bravery, ambition and steadfastness (Connell 2002b: 39), which, if combined with traditionally feminised qualities, such as caring, patience and empathy, could provide a model of soldier identity ideally suited to conflict resolution. That such change is unthinkable to many British Army policy makers today (Cockburn and Hubic 2002: 118; Higate 2003a), does not mean that the emergence of a discourse of peacekeeper masculinity is insignificant. Disruptions to established discourses linking masculinity and militarism are there to be encouraged and exploited rather than dismissed and ignored.

Claire Duncanson  
University of Edinburgh



Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr Fiona Mackay of the University of Edinburgh and the two anonymous *International Feminist Journal of Politics* reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example, Fetherston 1995; Lorentzen and Turpin 1998; Cockburn and Zarkov 2002b; Razack 2004 and Whitworth 2004.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Enloe 1993; Morgan 1994; Goldstein 2001; Higate 2003b; and Whitworth 2004.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Enloe 1989; Enloe 1993; Elshtain 1997; Enloe 2000; Moser and Clark 2001; El Jack 2003 , and Mazurana, Raven-Roberts and Parpart 2005 .

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

## REFERENCES

- Barrett, F. J. 2001. 'The Organisational Construction of Hegemonic Masculinities', in Barret, F. J. and Whitehead, S. M. (eds) *The Masculinities Reader*, pp.77-99. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Carrigan, T., Connell, R. W. and Lee, J. 1985. 'Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity', *Theory and Society* 14 (5): 551-604.
- Cheeseman, G. 2005. 'Military Force(s) and In/security', in Booth, K. (ed.) *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*, pp. 63-87. Boulder: Lynne Reinner.
- Cockburn, C. and Hubic, M. 2002. 'Gender and the Peacekeeping Military: a view from Bosnian women's organizations', in Cockburn, C. and Zarkov, D. (eds) *The Postwar Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping*, pp. 103-121. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Cockburn, C. and Zarkov, D. 2002a. 'Introduction', in Cockburn, C. and Zarkov, D. (eds) *The Postwar Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping*, pp. 9-21. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Cockburn, C. and Zarkov, D. 2002b. *The Post War Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Cohn, C., Hill, F. and Ruddick, S. 2005. 'The Relevance of Gender for Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction', *Disarmament Diplomacy* (80).
- Connell, R. W. 1987. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Connell, R. W. 1995. *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Connell, R. W. 2002a. *Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

- Connell, R. W. 2002b. 'Masculinities, the Reduction of Violence, and the Pursuit of Peace', in Cockburn, C. and Zarkov, D. (eds) *The Post War Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping*, pp. 33-40. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Connell, R. W. and Messerschmidt, J. 2005. 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and Society* 19 (6): 829-859.
- Dandeker, C. 2000. 'The United Kingdom: The Overstretched Military', in Moskos, C., Segal, D. R. and Williams, J. A. (eds) *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War*, pp. 32-50. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Demetriou, D. Z. 2001. 'Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique', *Theory and Society* 30 (3): 337-361.
- Dorman, A. 2002. 'British Defence Policy in the Post Cold War Era: History Comes Full Circle?' in Dorman, A. M., Smith, M. L. and Uttley, M. (eds) *The Changing Face of Military Power*, pp. 177-199. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dorman, A. 2005. 'The United Kingdom', in Elliot, L. and Cheeseman, G. (eds) *Forces for Good: Cosmopolitan Militaries in the Twenty First Century*, pp. 237-249. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Duncan, A. 1994. 'Operating in Bosnia', *Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Journal* 139 (3): 11-15.
- El Jack, A. 2003. Gender and Armed Conflict: Overview Report. Brighton: Bridge (Development - Gender), Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

Elshtain, J. B. 1997. *Women and War*: Basic Books.

Enloe, C. 1989. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Enloe, C. 1993. *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Enloe, C. 2000. *Maneuvers: the International Politics of Militarising Women's Lives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fetherston, A. B. 1995. 'UN Peacekeepers and Cultures of Violence', *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 19 (1): ??.

Goldstein, J. 2001. *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hansen, L. 2006. *Security as Practice*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Harrison, L. 2001. *Political Research: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Higate, P. 2003a. 'Concluding Thoughts: Looking to the Future', in Higate, P. (ed.) *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State*, pp. 201-216. Westport: Praeger.

Higate, P. (ed.). 2003b. *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State*. Westport: Praeger.

Higate, P. 2003c. "'Soft Clerks" and "Hard Civvies": Pluralizing Military Masculinities', in Higate, P. (ed.) *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State*, pp. 27-42. Westport: Praeger.

Higate, P. and Henry, M. 2004. 'Engendering (In)security in Peace Support Operations', *Security Dialogue* 35 (4): 481-498.

Holmes, R. 2006. *Dusty Warriors: Modern Soldiers at War*. London: Harper Press.

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

Hooper, C. 1998. 'Masculinist Practices and Gender Politics: The Operation of Multiple Masculinities in International Relations', in Zalewski, M. and Parpart, J. (eds) *The "Man" Question in International Relations*, pp. 28-53. Boulder: Westview Press.

Hooper, C. 2000. *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations, and Gender Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hynes, S. 1998. *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War*. London: Pimlico.

International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. 2001. *The Responsibility to Protect*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

Kovitz, M. 2003. 'The Roots of Military Masculinity', in Higate, P. (ed.) *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State*, pp. 1-14. Westport: Praeger.

Lorentzen, L. A. and Turpin, J. (eds) 1998. *The Women and War Reader*. New York: New York University Press.

Mazurana, D. 2005. 'Gender and the Causes and Consequences of Armed Conflict', in Mazurana, D., Raven-Roberts, A. and Parpart, J. (eds) *Gender, Conflict and Peacekeeping*, pp. 29-42. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Mazurana, D., Raven-Roberts, A. and Parpart, J. 2005. *Gender, Conflict and Peacekeeping*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Mazurana, D., Raven-Roberts, A., Parpart, J. and Lautze, S. 2005. 'Introduction: Gender, Conflict and Peacekeeping', in Mazurana, D., Raven-Roberts, A. and

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

Parpart, J. (eds) *Gender, Conflict and Peacekeeping*, pp. 1-26. Lanham:

Rowman and Littlefield.

McManners, H. 1993. *The Scars of War*. London: Harper Collins.

Ministry of Defence. 1998. Strategic Defence Review.

Ministry of Defence. 2003. Defence White Paper: Delivering Security in a Complex World.

Morgan, D. 1994. 'Theatre of War: Combat, the Military, and Masculinities', in Brod, H. and Kaufman, M. (eds) *Theorising Masculinities*, pp. 165-182. London: Sage.

Moser, C. and Clark, F. (eds) 2001. *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict, and Political Violence*. London: Zed Books.

Moskos, C., Williams, J. A. and Segal, D. R. 2000. 'Armed Forces after the Cold War', in Moskos, C., Williams, J. A. and Segal, D. R. (eds) *The Post Modern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War*, pp. 1-13. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Niva, S. 1997. 'Tough and Tender: New World Order, Masculinity and the Gulf War', in Zalewski, M. and Parpart, J. (eds) *The 'Man Question' in International Relations*, pp. 109-128. Boulder: Westview.

Orford, A. 1999. 'Muscular Humanitarianism: Reading the Narratives of the New Interventionism', *European Journal of International Law* 10 (4): 679-711.

Personal Narratives Group. 1989. *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

Peterson, V. S. and True, J. 1998. "'New Times' and New Conversations', in Zalewski M. and Parpart, J. (eds) *The 'Man' Question in International Relations*, pp. 14-27. Boulder: Westview Press.

Plummer, K. 2001. *Documents of Life 2: An Invitation to Critical Humanism*. London: Sage.

Razack, S. 2004. *Dark Threats and White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping and the new Imperialism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Rose, M. 1998. *Fighting for Peace: Lessons from Bosnia*. London: Warner Books.

Segal, L. 1997. *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men (Second Edition)*. Second ed. London: Virago.

Smith, S. and Watson, J. 2001. *Reading Autobiography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Stankovic, M. 2000. *Trusted Mole: A Soldier's Journey into Bosnia's Heart of Darkness*. London: Harper Collins.

Tickner, A. 1999. 'Why Women Can't Run the World: International Politics According to Francis Fukuyama', *International Studies Review* 1 (3): 3-12.

United Nations. 1996. *UNPROFOR Mission Profile*. United Nations Department of Public Information, Available at [http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co\\_mission/unprof\\_p.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/unprof_p.htm) (accessed 20 June 2006)

Wheeler, N. 2000. *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

Whitworth, S. 2004. *Men, Militarism and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*.

Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Woolley, M. 2004. *Cleanse Their Souls: Peacekeeping in Bosnia's Civil War 1992-1993*. Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military.